

Customers' Perception Towards Service Quality Selected Star Hotels in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

This study paper's goal is to use SERVQUAL to assess the level of service provided by upscale hotels in Chennai. Given its distinctive qualities—such as intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, and inseparability—providing high-quality services is one of the most significant and challenging tasks that any service organisation must undertake. In terms of many but comparatively significant aspects of service quality, the degree and direction of the disparity between customers' expectations and perceptions is known as service. Customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality have been ascertained through empirical research, and the use of a complete scale taken from "SERVQUAL" in Chennai luxury hotels has been experimentally assessed. The research's conclusions are based on comparing the ratings of luxury hotels' expectations and perceptions, which were obtained by asking customers to complete a questionnaire. The results of this study will assist Chennai hotel managers in better understanding their patrons and, as a result, in raising the calibre of their offerings.

Keywords: Customers' Perception, SERVQUAL, intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity.

Introduction

All service organisations strive to give their clients the best, highest-quality services available, but they frequently fail to meet their expectations since clients are now more conscious of their needs and expect better services. One of the most crucial factors for obtaining a long-term competitive edge in the market is service in the fiercely competitive hotel sector. As a result, service managers and academic researchers focus their efforts on figuring out how customers view service quality. Since customers are typically the ones who evaluate service quality, the definition of service quality is predicated on how well a service fulfils or surpasses their expectations. Even though assessing quality can be challenging, buyers may only select a service based on its quality. According to recent studies, globalisation, the introduction of new information and communications technology, and consumers' increasing desire for high-quality goods and services have all significantly altered the way services are delivered. (Mensah, 2009). India's rich history, which includes the well-known Taj Mahal, Red Fort, several temples and caverns, and numerous other notable landmarks, makes it a desirable travel destination. Because of our nation's commercial links with the rest of the globe, a large number of businesspeople and officials travel to India for business purposes in addition to vacationers. In a similar vein, there are people in our nation who travel for work or pleasure between states or between cities.

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Review of Literature

The literature describes several models that conceptualized the concept of service quality. (e.g. Zemke, 1985 and Garvin, 1988; Albrecht Parasuraman et al, 1988; Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991; Dabholkar et al, 1996). highlighted that the gap between the customer's assessment of the service they received and their expectations of the service provider's performance determines the quality of the service. The concept of service quality is a multifaceted phenomenon with multiple components that contribute to the construct. (parasuraman), There are many study findings to the effect that service companies are promoted enormously through their reliable customers (Anderson and Zeithaml, 1984).

According to Gronroos (1982), consumers assess a service's quality by contrasting their expectations with their impressions of the services they actually received. Both a transaction-specific quality judgement and a global judgement reflecting the degree of service could exist, according to Zeithaml et al. (1994). (Urbany et al., 1999) There are two main ways to measure service quality: (i) as a general assessment of service quality (i.e., an attitude towards the entire service experience); or (ii) as a collection of opinions regarding various aspects of the service experience (e.g. perceptions of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy). Customers view service quality as "the features of services which meet customers' needs and necessities and thereby provide customer satisfaction," according to Juran (1999). Accordingly, scholars have viewed service quality as an attitude developed by a comprehensive and long-term assessment of a company's performance (Hoffman and Bateson, 2001). Three components work together harmoniously to provide hospitality services: tangible goods, staff conduct and attitude, and the surrounding environment (Reuland et al., 1985). In 1996, El Farra discovered that the primary determinant of customers' preference for medium-priced hotels is pricing. Juwaheer (2004) examined the strategic significance of service quality in Mauritius' hotels, whereas Thomson and Thomson (1995) studied the quality problems of nine hotels in Wellington, New Zealand. Shergill (2004) used factor analysis to determine the elements that consumers deemed significant and investigated how tourists perceived the level of service provided by New Zealand hotels. According to Davidson (2003a), a positive organisational climate and the calibre of services provided in a hotel are causally related. Davidson (2003b) looked at hotel service quality in another study and included customer satisfaction in organisational climate and culture. According to Fernandez (2004), SERVQUAL was thought to be the best instrument for evaluating hotel service quality. Markovic and Raspor (2010) state that "reliability," "staff competence and empathy," "accessibility," and "tangibles" are the primary factors that determine how well a hotel's services are viewed. The performance of a hotel as a service industry is significantly influenced by the aspects of service quality. Therefore, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the service providers, it is imperative to regularly measure customer satisfaction (Molah and Jusoh, 2011). Gunaratne (2014) found that tangibility was the most significant predictor of tourism service quality evaluation, followed by responsiveness, empathy, and dependability. According to Asirifi et al. (2014), service responsiveness—that is, a responsive attitude and a timely answer to a client's request—does negatively impact service quality, which can result in customer loyalty and profitability.

In a nutshell it is crucial to deliver exceptional and fulfilling service quality in order to draw in and keep clients. This study therefore used gap scores and the "SERVQUAL" model to examine the expectations and perceptions of hotel guests. Hotel managers can identify gaps and then enhance the level of services provided by luxury hotels in Chennai by evaluating and contrasting guest opinions with the actual service quality.

Objectives of the Study

This paper's primary goals are to outline a conceptual framework for service quality that takes into account both the service provider and the service recipient. The purpose of the current study was to assess the level of service provided by a few Chennai luxury hotels. Below is a list of the study's objectives:

- To investigate how customers view the level of service at a few Chennai luxury hotels
- To examine service gaps in selected hotel and make conclusions on the significance of various
- Aspects of service quality in the selected location.

Research Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was used to gauge hotel guests' opinions. In order to accommodate the unique characteristics of a hotel setting, the questionnaire was modified based on a review of the literature (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988; Zeithaml et al. 1990; Snoj and Ogorelc

1998; Pizam and Ellis 1999; Markovic 2003). This questionnaire was developed using the SERVQUAL paradigm as a basis.

There were two sections to the questionnaire. A modified SERVQUAL model was used in the first section to gauge how visitors felt about the hotel's features. SERVQUAL measures customer expectations and perceptions through two 29-item sections. It is based on five dimensions of service quality: "Tangibility" (physical facilities, equipment, and personnel appearance), "Reliability" (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), "Responsiveness" (willingness to help customers and prompt service), "Assurance" (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to gain trust and confidence), and "Empathy" (providing individualised attention to the customers).

Perceptions of service quality were assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." 1 = strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = somewhat in agreement 4 = Consent 5 = Definitely Agree. The goal of the second section was to collect the demographic and travel characteristics of the respondents, including their country of residence, age, gender, reason for visiting, length of stay at a hotel, educational attainment, and hotel type.

The convenience sampling method was used to deliver 120 questionnaires to the visitors in total. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to use SERVQUAL metrics to assess the level of service provided by upscale hotels in Chennai

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Particulars	No.of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	70	58.3
	Female	50	41.7
Age (in years)	35-45	65	54.2
	46-55	45	35.5
	Above 55	10	8.3
Nationality	Indian	97	80.8
	Foreigner	23	19.2
Income	Less than 50000	25	20.8
	50000-100000	32	26.7
	More than 100000	63	52.5
Mode of selection	Travel agencies/ Tour operators	93	77.5
	Phone	27	22.5
No.of days stayed	1 day	77	64.2
	2-5 days	35	29.2
	More than 5 days	8	6.7
Purpose of visit	Recreation and leisure	82	68.3
	Business purpose	38	31.7

Source: Primary data

The profile of the sample respondents is shown in above table revealed that 58.3 per cent of them were male, 54.2 per cent of them were between 35-45 years old. 52.5 per cent of the respondents have a monthly income of more than a lakh. 68.39 per cent of the respondents indicated that the main purpose of their visit was Recreation and leisure and for less than a day (68.3 per cent).

Variables	Mean Expectation Score (E)	Mean Perception Score (P)	Mean Gap Score (E-P)
The decor & ambience were appealing (T1)	4.00	3.71	0.29
All gadgets and equipment's were modern and well placed (T2)	3.70	3.67	0.03
The hotel was clean & common area is well Maintained (T3)	3.81	3.57	0.24
Toiletries and stationeries supplied was adequate (T4)	3.58	3.48	0.1
Employees had clean, neat uniforms, hygienic & well – groomed (T5)	3.76	3.73	0.03
Room service equipped with good, clean and Hygiene (T6)	3.85	3.63	0.22
The restaurant's atmosphere was inviting (T7)	3.68	3.60	0.08

My reservation was handled efficiently (RL1)	3.67	3.50	0.17
Currency Exchange dealing was proper (RL2)	3.61	3.36	0.25
Charges at check-out were accurate (RL3)	3.52	3.47	0.05
Received the types of room requested (RL4)	3.42	3.30	0.12
Pick-up / Drop drivers were reliable (RL5)	3.50	3.36	0.14
Check-in and check-out procedures were fast and efficient (RS1)	3.63	3.42	0.21
Valet parking available and efficient (RS2)	3.65	3.53	0.12
Restaurant service was prompt (RS3)	3.63	3.57	0.06
Handicapped guests were taken care with special attention (RS4)	3.40	3.37	0.03
Complaints were attended promptly (RS5)	3.42	3.39	0.03
Informative literature about the hotel was provided (RS6)	3.38	3.35	0.03
All staff were helpful & ready to extend service (RS7)	3.43	3.39	0.04
Receptionist offered available options (AS1)	3.54	3.54	0
The guestroom furnishings met my needs (AS2)	3.68	3.51	0.17
Price for Food and Beverages were nominal (AS3)	3.68	3.64	0.04
Employees at the front desk protected my privacy (AS4)	3.56	3.37	0.19
The hotel provided a safe environment (AS5)	3.50	3.41	0.09
Safe storage of my belongings was available (AS6)	3.46	3.43	0.03
Employees anticipated my needs & expectations (EM1)	3.69	3.61	0.08
Employees made every effort to fulfill my request (EM2)	3.60	3.56	0.04
Manager was available if I had confusion (EM3)	3.56	3.50	0.06
Room services and response was prompt (EM4)	3.57	3.51	0.06

Note: T = Tangibility; RL = Reliability; RS = Responsiveness; AS = Assurance; EM = Empathy.

Above table presents the means for the perception and expectation items relating to the five dimensions of service quality in the SERVQUAL model. The means for expectations ranged from 3.38 (=Neutral) to 4.00 (= Agree). The lowest mean of 3.675 was in the 'Responsiveness' dimension on item RS6, about the Informative literature about the hotel was provided regarding service quality of luxury hotels. The highest expectation mean of 4.00 was on Tangibility item T1 indicates that the decor & ambience were appealing during their stay at hotel.

For perceptions the mean scores ranged from 3.30 to 3.73 (Neutral). The lowest mean was on item RL4 of 'Reliability' which referred to the Received the types of room requested' which some of the respondents neutral since according to most of the respondents in some of the services the actual service deviates from the predefined service time resulting in slight delay in service delivery. The highest mean score for perception was on item T5 of 'Tangibility' dimension indicates that Employees had clean, neat uniforms, hygienic & well –groomed to which most of the guests somewhat agreed to it.

Suggestions

Since there is a discrepancy between customer expectations and customer perceptions in every SERVQUAL component, it is advised that all of the dimensions receive attention based on the research and interpretation done for this study. In these situations, a number of commendations and suggestions were made, including the following: The services must be rendered in the allotted time frame. To expand parking capacity, luxury hotels should take up more area. Services have to be provided right away. Since these hotels fall within the luxury category, each client needs to receive individual attention. Thus, hotel managers also need to emphasize the "empathy" feature. More training is necessary for staff members to grow and serve clients more effectively, which will increase the customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, management of luxury hotel service can benefit from understanding how customers view service quality and having the ability to quantify it. Management can monitor and sustain better service quality by using the accurate data that is provided by measuring service quality. Management can gain a better understanding of the many factors and their impact on customer satisfaction and service quality by using the SERVQUAL model to evaluate service quality. The SERVQUAL gap score, which measures the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions, proven to be a highly helpful tool for evaluating service quality levels. According to Parasuraman, SERVQUAL can be modified to fit any type of service organisation with only minor adjustments. Managers can identify

areas for performance improvement by using data on service quality gaps. Prioritizing performance improvement is made easier by identifying the biggest gap and determining where expectations are highest. The five service quality parameters included in this study's survey of a few luxury hotels in Chennai reflect the standards by which visitors judge the quality of the services provided by these establishments. The results demonstrate how important it is to focus on the factors that influence service quality because these factors have a big impact on how well a hotel performs as a service industry. Therefore, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the service providers, it is imperative to regularly measure client satisfaction. The nature of these performance determinants has been better understood thanks to this paper, which may be useful to hotel management in the real world. Only when service organisations continuously meet or surpass customer service standards can they build a solid reputation for providing high-quality services. Managers can enhance the quality of services provided by their companies by being knowledgeable about these areas.

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